

The question is, how can poor, elderly New Mexicans possibly come up with the additional resources, this additional \$2,000 that it is anticipated they will have to come up with? Medicaid currently pays for \$188 million of nursing home care in New Mexico annually. I heard the Senator from North Dakota speak about the woman who had a husband in a nursing home.

We have many people in nursing homes in my State, and they benefit substantially from the payments that Medicaid makes. Through the Medicaid Program the State typically picks up the extra cost where Medicaid falls off. But to do so, under the cuts that are proposed, the State must raise additional revenue. And it would be substantial additional revenue, this \$188 million that I referred to earlier. That would be in addition to the \$600 to \$900 million shortfall which also would have to be made up if services were to continue as they presently are.

If New Mexico will not or cannot raise the revenue needed to keep the safety net in place without Federal assistance for these 300,000 current beneficiaries, the results are very clear, Mr. President. Thousands of seniors and children in my State will be denied adequate health care in the future.

The arguments for these cuts are well known by all of us. Proponents say the cuts are necessary to get us to a balanced budget. But if a balanced budget is the goal, then my question is, why here today at this very moment do we have a committee marking up a bill to cut taxes in this country by \$245 billion over this same period? If a balanced budget is the goal, and poor children and seniors have to do without health care in order to meet that goal, then why cannot the Congress also limit spending for the Pentagon to the amount that the Pentagon requested?

All of New Mexico's shortfall, every single dollar of New Mexico's shortfall in Federal funds for health care could be offset by foregoing one of the additional B-2 bombers that the Republican Congress insists on ordering.

So this debate, in my view, is not about whether we should reduce expenditures on health care. Clearly, we need to make some reductions. And we will do that. The debate is how deep those cuts will be, where the greatest burden of this deficit reduction will fall, what the priorities of this Nation are. These priorities should include maintaining decent health care for the most vulnerable in our society. The proposal that is being presented to us this next week does not provide for that.

Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to speak. And I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. DORGAN. I yield 7 minutes to the Senator from West Virginia.

OBJECTION TO FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I thank the distinguished presiding officer and the distinguished Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. President, crowds are gathering to watch a train wreck. It is going to be a budget wreck. And it is going to be a horrible, horrible pileup. Maybe that ghoulis fascination about what is ahead is, in fact, distracting us, diverting us from the daily bashing that vulnerable Americans are taking every single day in the actions of this Congress.

But today, weeks before that big crash, I have seen enough. Speaking for this Senator, the junior Senator from West Virginia, I have seen enough. I have been fighting, offering amendments, voting no, but today I object. I object to all of it, to taking one more step, to letting the latest injury go unanswered.

I have put in an objection to the Senate Finance Committee's meeting. And as a result of my objection, they cannot meet after the hour of 2. And I will do that every day, and I will do that all the way through the reconciliation process until a particular part involving old coal miners is removed from the bill the Senate Finance Committee is now working on.

This new Republican leadership will go to any length to seize the crown jewel of their contract. And that is to ring out \$245 billion in new tax breaks for a privileged few. But at what cost? At whose expense? Every day their answer becomes more savage. Pilfering school lunch moneys, turning 4-year-olds away from Head Start classes, eliminating standards for screening and testing for childhood diseases.

Where does it end? Not there. Brick by brick, they are tearing down the Medicare Program, the efficient, effective, popular insurance program that protects senior citizens from poverty, which they once knew, and pain, turning their backs on the elderly and in nursing homes, allowing again, as we cut out almost 10 years ago, patients in nursing homes who were considered to be disruptive to be tethered down, tied down, or drugged into passivity. That will now be legal. And it will be done. Doubling the cost of health insurance for the most fragile amongst us. Had enough?

Sticking students with higher loan fees, squeezing out job training opportunities, cutting the number of college loans, opening a loophole to drop the disabled from health coverage. Senator CHAFEE and I did that. It passed the Senate Finance Committee 17 to 3. Pregnant women, children 12 years and younger, and the disabled. And unilaterally it was dropped. And then at the last moment, because some of us came to the floor of the U.S. Senate to expose that ruse, it was put back in, sort of, by saying, "Let the States set the standards."

Charging families more to care for their mentally ill or retarded children. Closing the doors on more than half of our special ed classrooms. How much more could they want? Mugging the working poor with a \$43 billion tax hike.

What do I mean by that? The earned-income tax credit being cut by \$43 billion. Those are people who are living out America's dream, working without health insurance, all of them virtually, but working, refusing to go on welfare, many of them making less money than if they were on welfare, and their kids not getting Medicaid, health care coverage to boot. But they are doing it because they want to work.

So we talk about honoring work in America. And then we turn around and cut those who are at the very bottom edge of the working poor, a \$43 billion tax increase for them, money which they earned which they will now not get to keep because we are changing the rules on them.

We are turning off the heat, Mr. President. We are turning off the heat, quite literally, taking away money from remedial reading and writing for poor children. Are they done yet? No. Not quite.

Today a new provision to unravel the health benefits for retired coal miners and their widows has been added to this long list of atrocities. It is a small group, Mr. President, only 92,000 individuals in all 50 States. A small group, I admit that; the average age, 76 years old. Most worked in the mines for decades back in the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's.

They had to work in 3-foot crawl spaces in ice water. They did the hard work, pick and shovel. And now we want to take away their health insurance. It is being done in the Senate Finance Committee. These were the people that fueled the economic growth and the prosperity of our country. These days I meet these miners that I am talking about in their homes in West Virginia. Many struggle to walk.

Mr. President, if I could only describe to you what it is for an older miner, attached to oxygen, with black lung, with all kinds of problems of breathing, taking a fistful of pills a day. Just a simple act, to watch that miner try to get up out of his chair and then to walk very, very slowly across the room to the television set to change the channel or to turn the set on or off, and then very slowly come back, fall back into that chair—almost a day's journey is the physical impact of that.

These are the people we are talking about. Old people, ravaged by the only work that they possibly could have done, because of where they grew up and what work was available. Pills for blood pressure, for constant joint pain. They do not have much. They never earned a lot. There are no big pensions.

But these miners, Mr. President, traded wages every year. They traded wages that they got for digging coal to get health insurance security, because

to the miner, health insurance is more significant in the long term than the wages of the pension. But they wanted the health insurance in their old age, to earn coverage for their wives, too often widowed too early. They sacrificed for the guarantee of coverage, a guarantee that was sealed by this Government in law and which was promised to them by President Harry S. Truman, the U.S. Government, and which we, in a bipartisan way, passed into law in something called the Coal Act back in 1952, which is in the process of being repealed by the Republican majority.

These benefits, Mr. President, were guaranteed by a promise made by that President 50 years ago. So what is a contract worth? They ask; I ask. These coal miners escaped floods, they escaped roof falls, they escaped explosions, they escaped the ravages of black lung. They still survive, a few of them, across this country, 92,000. But they may not survive this Republican Congress, and I am sad to say there is probably more to come.

But for me, I have seen enough. I have seen enough. Every person has a line, a line in the sand. Every one of my colleagues has a line. For me, the line is these old miners. I cannot, I will not, go back to West Virginia without knowing that I did everything—everything—to stop this cruelty.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I ask unanimous consent for 1 more minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, no amount of procedural pain or legislative suffering that I, as a Senator, rightfully can impose—and will—could possibly offset the pain and the suffering being imposed on so many fragile people by the measures being rammed through the Senate Finance Committee and this Congress.

I recognize that the powerful interests who will benefit from these harsh measures will probably win and these coal miners will probably be cut off. But I want to make it hard, and I have the right to make it hard, and I have the moral obligation to make it hard for anybody to do that. I only wish I could make it as hard for them as they intend to make it—we in the Congress, that is—for the children and the seniors and the students and the disabled and the poor working families and those old coal miners. That is my line in the sand. I fully object to what this Congress is doing.

I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Illinois, Senator SIMON.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Illinois.

BALANCING THE BUDGET

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from North Dakota for yielding to me.

Senator BOXER, whose work I have come to appreciate more and more in this body, and I had a press conference in which we had some senior citizens and some students, senior citizens talking about the need for student aid, students talking about how we have to protect our grandparents. The reality is this should not be a partisan fight.

I am sure the Presiding Officer has heard me mention before we have become excessively partisan. It is one of the changes that has happened in my years in Congress, and it is not a good change. I think, frankly, the Republican Party is going to get hurt somewhat in the course of all this. But there is too much partisanship in all of this. I do not believe it makes sense when we have huge deficits—and the Washington Post had an editorial about this this morning—to be saying we are going to have a tax cut.

It is like saying you are having a New Year's resolution of going on a diet, and you are going to start it off by having a great big dessert. That is what we are doing now. We are going to balance the budget, but we are going to have a \$245 billion tax cut.

If we want to use that \$245 billion for reducing the deficit, I would understand that. But that is not what is happening, and I do not think there is any question about what we are going to impose on seniors. Also—and it has not received as much attention as Medicare has—Medicaid is also going to really be hurt. Who receives Medicaid? The majority of those who receive it are children, poor children—24 percent of our young people live in poverty—and senior citizens, those who are in nursing homes. They are basically the primary recipients.

But it is part of a pattern of not being as responsive as we should be. Let me just tie in with what those grandparents said out in front of the Capitol just a few minutes ago at the press conference on student aid.

The Presiding Officer will forgive me to say he is old enough, along with me, to remember the GI bill. It is interesting how the GI bill emerged. The GI bill, which we look back to with great pride and say what a great thing it was for our country, was a matter of controversy. There were those who said we ought to give a cash bonus to veterans, and the American Legion, to their great credit, said we ought to have the GI bill which will provide education to veterans. That was the fight.

Today we have almost a similar fight. Cash bonus—we do not call it a cash bonus, we call it a tax cut. Like the cash bonus, it will be frittered away and will not do much for our country. But if we put money into student aid, we are going to do something for our country.

Direct lending is under attack, and this is not a Democratic program. TOM

PETRI, a Republican from Wisconsin, was the first one to suggest it. My colleague, Senator Dave Durenberger, was a cosponsor with me of direct lending when it was introduced. Senator David Durenberger has properly said, in regard to the role of banks and the guarantee agencies, "This is not free enterprise, it is a free lunch." That is why the banks and the guarantee agencies are fighting for this.

The commission that looked into how we ought to have student aid, headed by our former Republican colleague Senator Paula Hawkins, recommended direct lending. Larry Lindsey, a Bush appointee to the Federal Reserve Board, has said we should have direct lending, it makes more sense, in a letter to our colleague, Senator SPENCER ABRAHAM.

We have to be looking out for the interest of the young and the old, for everyone in our society. We have to reach out. And I hope we use some common sense. We are going to be in this battle the middle of next week. And to say we are going to have tax cuts for people at the same time we deprive elderly and students of the help that they need, I do not think is in the national interest.

I simply ask the Presiding Officer—and I know he cannot answer this from the chair—I have not yet had one person with an income over \$100,000 come up to me and say, "I ought to have a tax cut." I have had a lot of people come to me and say, "We should not be cutting back on Medicare, we should not be cutting back on Medicaid, we should not be cutting back to assistance to students." Those are the choices that we have, and I hope we do the responsible thing here.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Washington, Senator MURRAY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from the State of Washington.

CUTS IN MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to join my colleagues in exposing to the light of day the real lasting affects of the deep, reckless cuts in Medicare and Medicaid that are being rushed through this Congress. I want to focus specifically on the massive proposed scaling back of Medicaid and how it completely ignores the values of average, middle-income families today.

Let me focus for a minute on one of the hidden surprises in the Medicaid block grant proposal—one that is going to devastate the so-called sandwich generation—my generation. The sandwich generation is those of us who are raising our kids at home, and who are also responsible for the health and safety of our aging parents.

Today, under current Medicaid laws that have been in effect since 1965, adult children are not held legally or financially liable for their parents'